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TAGS: EAGR ECON ETRD SENV TBIO KPAO MZ
SUBJECT: MAPUTO'S PROPOSAL FOR BIOTECHNOLOGY FUNDS

REF: A. STATE 129940
¶B. PRETORIA 2513

¶1. Summary: Embassy Maputo requests funding from the FY 2009 Biotechnology Outreach Strategy Fund to bring two subject matter experts to Mozambique to meet with regulators, academia, consumers, and legislators on currently relevant topics such as risk assessments, field trial management, labeling of foods containing genetically modified organisms, regional harmonization, and intellectual property rights. This proposal was developed by FAS/Pretoria in coordination with EST/Econ and PAS. We considered Government of Mozambique (GRM) and NGO representatives' input to establish this proposal.

¶2. Since FAS/Pretoria is a regional post, covering much of Southern Africa, we are coordinating with Embassies in Madagascar, Mozambique, and Mauritius to submit separate proposals requesting funding for similar programs to support a regional biotech strategy. End Summary.

Regional Background

¶3. Over the past 4 years, using funding from State/EEB and USDA, FAS/Pretoria has developed relationships with key partners in Southern Africa, the United States, and international organizations to address regulatory and public acceptance issues pertaining to biotechnology. As these relationships have developed, trust and respect has also grown between the USG and the biotech industry, both public and private. To continue to build on these relationships, we are requesting funding again this year to bring U.S. experts to engage the local industry and stakeholders in discussions on topics such as labeling, risk assessments, management of field trials, and regional harmonization.

¶4. Misinformation and misperceptions about biotechnology threaten the acceptance of U.S. agricultural and food products derived from biotechnology in Southern Africa and threaten U.S. producers, access to international markets. U.S. exports to the largest markets in the region (South Africa, Mauritius, Madagascar, and Mozambique) grew over 30 percent from 2007 to 2008, due to increases in exports of intermediate and consumer oriented agricultural goods, such as vegetable oils and prepared sauces and cereals. It is expected that U.S. exports to these markets will continue to increase in 2009 and beyond as consumer demand increases and these countries begin to diversify their suppliers to include the United States. USDA cooperators' interest in conducting activities in these markets is also on the rise, leading to increased interest in the United States as a supplier.

¶5. Several key countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have passed biosafety legislation in the past year, or are in the process of formulating their policies and have requested help from USDA. These include South Africa, Mozambique, Madagascar, and Mauritius. All have drafted biosafety policies and are currently working on implementation procedures. They are very pro-biotech, but admittedly lack the necessary understanding of many aspects of biotech and genetic engineering. There is a significant need for training on implementation procedures, characteristics of efficient regulatory frameworks, producer and consumer awareness strategies.

¶6. The lack of basic understanding of agricultural biotechnology among consumers, members of the media and political decision makers is a critical impediment to a rational, pragmatic acceptance of the technology. The African public remains easily persuaded by misinformation regarding the basic risks, benefits and regulatory approaches to best evaluate the benefits of adopting agricultural biotechnology. Biosafety committees in the region remain inactive or unsure where to focus their attention due to a lack of understanding of the benefits of biotechnology. Due to this lack of activity, science-based information in the regulatory decision making process is minimal and opponents of biotechnology are the most vocal input, which could be reflected in new regulations concerning GMOs.

The Agricultural Sector in Mozambique

¶7. In Mozambique, agriculture contributes over 25 percent to GDP and nearly 80 percent of its population relies on agriculture for survival. Due to agriculture's vulnerability to natural disasters (droughts and floods), agricultural sector growth fell below GDP growth during the late 1990's through the present. Twice the size of California, Mozambique has approximately 36 million hectares of arable land. Only 12 percent, however, is under cultivation. The agricultural sector is divided between small-holder subsistence farmers, who are responsible for about 94 percent of total agricultural production, and commercial farms, owned mostly by businesses, which are responsible for the remaining 6 percent of agricultural production.

¶8. The commercial farm segment grew approximately 45 percent from 2001 to 2003, with a focus on cultivation of tobacco, cotton, and sugar. From 2002 to 2004 agricultural exports increased approximately 40 percent to $266 million. Non-agricultural exports during the same period increased approximately 98 percent. Mozambique continues to be a net food importer despite its natural resources base. In 2004 agricultural commodity imports totaled approximately $294 million. Wheat, rice, and vegetable oils (palm and soybean) were the top commodities imported, followed by oranges, corn, and poultry. Agricultural exports, not including forestry and seafood, totaled $122 million in 2004. Tobacco, cashews, cotton and sugar were the major commodities exported.

Biotechnology in Mozambique

¶9. Mozambique has signed and ratified the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, and the Convention on Biological Diversity. A National Biosafety Framework was drafted to help guide further development of biotechnology activities. These regulatory framework efforts were largely due to the presence of a UNEP/GEF program for 18 months that helped prepare the National Biosafety Frameworks "in agreement with the provisions of Cartagena Protocol" and help Mozambique ratify the Protocol. Thus, there are regulators with some training and understanding of biosafety issues such as assessment of food safety, environmental risk evaluation, LMO detection, etc. Mozambique has experience with biotech-related controversies and issues as it is a receiving/shipping point for donated corn from the United States for famine stricken-regions in Southern Africa (Zambia, Zimbabwe).

¶10. Mozambique is eager to improve its agricultural productivity and recognizes that biotechnology can be a valuable tool to enhance the efficiency of its farming sector and help in reducing dependence on inputs while improving the quality of food. However, there has been little or no investment so far in biotechnology research although some strides have been made with biosafety regulation. Due to the potential of the agriculture sector in Mozambique, and the lack of investment/advancement in that sector, the Government of Mozambique made a call for a second green revolution for Mozambique. One of the tools that will be a leading factor in bringing change and advancement in the agriculture sector in Mozambique will be the promotion and use of biotechnology. Identified as a cross-cutting technology in Mozambique's Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy ("MOSTIS" - see septel), due to the enormous potential this technology has to impact various sectors of the economy, biotechnology policy development is moving more rapidly in Mozambique than in Madagascar.

¶11. A National Biosecurity Regulation on Genetically Modified Organisms was published in the GOM official bulletin on April 25, 2007. This regulation was formulated by the Inter-Institutional Group on Biosecurity (GIIBS). The GIIBS is tasked to coordinate biosafety activities in Mozambique. It is an inter-institutional and multi-disciplinary group with the task of coordinating the process to establish the National Biosafety Framework including the development of biosafety policy, regulatory regime, and administration based on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, which Mozambique ratified in December 2001. The Ministry of Science and Technology is the national competent authority and presides over the GIIBS. The GIIBS consists of representatives from each of the following Ministries: Science and Technology, Agriculture, Environment, Health, Industry and Commerce, Fisheries, Planning and Development, and academic and research institutions. Additionally, representatives and specialists from public and private entities may be invited to participate in GIIBS meetings. (Note: Mozambique's biosafety policy appears to be largely risk-averse, and rooted in the 'precautionary principle' and thus more similar to the policies of European countries and that of EU. End Note)

Previous Biotech Outreach in Mozambique

¶12. FY2008 was the beginning of FAS/Pretoria and the Embassy's outreach in biotechnology in Mozambique. After initial contact and meetings with key biotechnology stakeholders, FAS/Pretoria secured funding from USDA's Emerging Markets Programs to host a workshop on basic biotechnology and regulations. The workshop provided an opening to further advance biotechnology and biosafety policies in Mozambique. The meeting featured lectures by two invited experts from overseas, Dr. C. S. Prakash, Tuskegee University, and Dr. Martin Lema, biosafety regulator from Argentina, along with some very high-level policy experts from various local ministries - Science and Technology, Agriculture, Environment, Health, and Trade; along with university scientists and also representatives from CGIAR centers.

¶13. As a result of this workshop and the relationships developed during those two days, FAS/Pretoria was invited to participate in a biotechnology regulations conference sponsored by the GRM and the Spanish Embassy in Maputo. FAS/Pretoria provided for the participation of a biotechnology researcher from South Africa's Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), who is also an active member of AfricaBio, Dr. Eugenia Barros. Dr. Barros was a speaker and moderator at the conference. She provided an excellent overview of biotechnology in South Africa and lessons learned through the development of its biosafety policy. Dr. Barros is a native Portuguese speaker, which lent credibility and audience acceptance to her presentation. Since the conference, Dr. Barros' has remained in contact

with the legislators and regulators in Mozambique and has consulted with them on various issues relating to biotechnology regulation implementation.

¶14. An important observation made throughout the biotechnology outreach efforts over the past year was the important need for capacity building to implement the biosafety regulation in their countries, especially in the development of specialists in food safety, environmental risk assessment, and intellectual property rights issues. The GRM has requested assistance in planning and implementing producer outreach strategies, including the development of educational materials in Portuguese. AfricaBio is working with contacts in Mozambique in developing these materials but are looking for assistance in funding the publication of educational materials in Portuguese.

¶15. Also in the past year, the Embassy hosted an Embassy Science Fellow to work with the GRM to prepare a report of the status of biotechnology in Mozambique and an implementation plan for advancement of biotechnology in Mozambique (septel).

Activity

¶16. As a continuation to activities conducted last year in Mozambique, we would like to bring two U.S. experts to Mozambique to address more specific concerns related to biotechnology regulations and implementation. The experts would travel to Mozambique for up to two weeks to engage with GRM representatives and other stakeholders on topics to include labeling, field trial management, risk analysis, producer and consumer outreach strategies, and regional harmonization. The Embassy proposes to hold special meetings for media contacts specifically associated with the agricultural and biotechnology sectors to discuss biotechnology regulations and developments in the United States. Additionally, PAS will arrange press opportunities for the visiting expert to engage journalists that cover agriculture, agribusiness and biotechnology issues. These could include roundtables with print media, one-on-one interviews, radio call-in programs, etc. The majority of the experts' time will be spent in Maputo, with the possibility of travel to other areas of the country to visit contacts, as needed. Also, we are requesting funding for translation and reproduction of outreach materials from English to Portuguese, as these materials are very scarce.

¶17. Length of Program: Two weeks

Cost for 2 experts:

TOTAL: $22,500.00

Airfare (US - Maputo - US): $8,000.00
Hotel and Per Diem (14 days): $6,500.00
Meeting Rooms: $2,000.00
Translation and Reproduction: $4,000.00
Miscellaneous (materials, invitations, etc): $2,000.00

¶18. As stated in the summary, FAS/Pretoria is the regional post responsible for coverage of most of Southern Africa, with no staff resident in those countries. FAS/Pretoria is collaborating with ECON/POL/PAS contacts in the missions in Antananarivo, Maputo, and Port Louis to submit similar proposals for biotech outreach events in those countries. Understanding that each proposal must stand on its own merit, we would like to have the group considered as a package that demonstrates a regional approach to biotechnology in Southern Africa. Regional trade plays a critical role in food security in Southern Africa, and disparate regulations dealing with biotechnology and its products could severely affect the flow of products, including food aid, among the countries. This regional approach is critical in ensuring regulations throughout the region are harmonized as not to affect trade, development, humanitarian assistance, and

investment.

¶18. Points of Contact: Kari Rojas, Agricultural Attache, FAS/Pretoria; (kari.rojas@fas.usda.gov, 27-12-431-4057) and Robert Doughten, EconOff, Embassy Maputo (DoughtenRF@state.gov, 258-2149-2797)
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